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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 007067

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SUBJECT: UNDERSECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT DOUBTS NEAR-TERM
RESOLUTION OF OAXACA CONFLICT

REF: MEXICO 6652

Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR ALAN MELTZER, REASONS:1.4 (B/
D)

11. (C) Summary: Undersecretary of Government Abraham Gonzalez Ulleda discussed the state of dialogue with Oaxaca protesters, asserted that agitators arrested by the GOM had received due process and were subsequently released from federal custody or transferred to state prisons, and acknowledged that the political fate of Governor Ulises Ruiz remains the key stumbling block to resolution of the conflict. Gonzalez said the GOM is working hard to be a balanced, fair, and stabilizing force in Oaxaca, holding perpetrators of violence accountable while respecting state sovereignty. He was more optimistic about the conflict's resolution in the medium than near term. End summary.

12. (C) Poloff met December 22 with Undersecretary of Government Abraham Gonzalez Ulleda to discuss the situation in Oaxaca and prospects for resolution of the six months-old conflict. Gonzalez, who joins Secretary of Government Francisco Ramirez Acuna from the state of Jalisco, described a new approach for dealing with the Oaxaca protest movement based on dialogue rather than negotiation. (Note: the Fox administration tried without success to negotiate with the People's Popular Assembly of Oaxaca (APPO), which has continued to demand the removal of Governor Ruiz. End note). He indicated that dialogue would proceed on a step-by-step basis determined by the good will of the stakeholders rather than binding commitments. He explained that the Federal Preventive Police's (PFP's) decision to withdraw from Oaxaca City on December 16 was a concession to the protest movement, but affirmed that agitators charged with violent actions would not be released, as demanded by the APPO. Dialogue with the APPO at the federal level is accompanied by a parallel state reform initiative proposed by Governor Ruiz.

13. (C) Gonzalez said that all detainees who had been sent to a federal prison in Nayarit following the violent November 25 protests had either been released or transferred to state prisons; he assured poloff that all those arrested had been charged under the law, received appropriate medical care, and access to their families and attorneys. Responding to a question about allegations from some human rights groups about abuses, Gonzalez said it was the nature of radical groups like the APPO to accuse the government of human rights abuses even when none existed. He added that the GOM is trying to be balanced in its efforts to stabilize Oaxaca, investigating accusations of wrongdoing not just by APPO members but also by supporters of the governor, while also

being careful to respect state sovereignty (he cited the December 7 PFP raid on Oaxaca ministerial police headquarters as an example of the GOM's balanced approach). Regarding the December 4 detention of APPO leader Flavio Sosa in Mexico City, Gonzalez said that Sosa had not traveled to the capital for dialogue with the federal government as some press accounts had indicated.

14. (C) The Undersecretary acknowledged that the key stumbling block to the conflict's resolution is the APPO's continued demand that Ruiz leave office and the governor's stubborn refusal to do so. Gonzalez believed that Ruiz's fate would most likely be decided on political, rather than legal grounds, adding that most PRI legislators seemed privately to want Ruiz to request a long-term leave of absence from office rather than to continue as a political liability for the party. Gonzalez told poloff that, although the Oaxaca state constitution specifies that elections would need to be held if the governor were to resign before completing three years in office (which will come in December 2007), a leave of absence would allow the PRI-dominated state congress to bypass elections and appoint an interim governor. When asked what he considered the likelihood that Ruiz would leave before the end of his six year term, Gonzalez assessed this would depend on public perceptions of the governor's credibility. He thought that public support for Ruiz, seldom strong, had increased among some segments as a result of the public's growing weariness with the economic and social damage caused by continued instability and the violence perpetuated by protesters on November 25.

15. (C) Comment: Undersecretary Gonzalez spoke earnestly about the GOM's desire to be a balanced, fair, and stabilizing

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force in Oaxaca that reduces violence there while ensuring respect for state sovereignty. Poloff observed in Gonzalez dissatisfaction with both the protest movement and Governor Ruiz, which may reflect a broader impatience among Calderon's team with the conflicting sides that have polarized Oaxaca society and failed to find common ground. Gonzalez indicated that the GOM under President Calderon has little tolerance for violent agitators and will hold them accountable for their crimes. He did not seem particularly optimistic about a quick resolution to the Oaxaca conflict but held more hope for resolution in the medium term.

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